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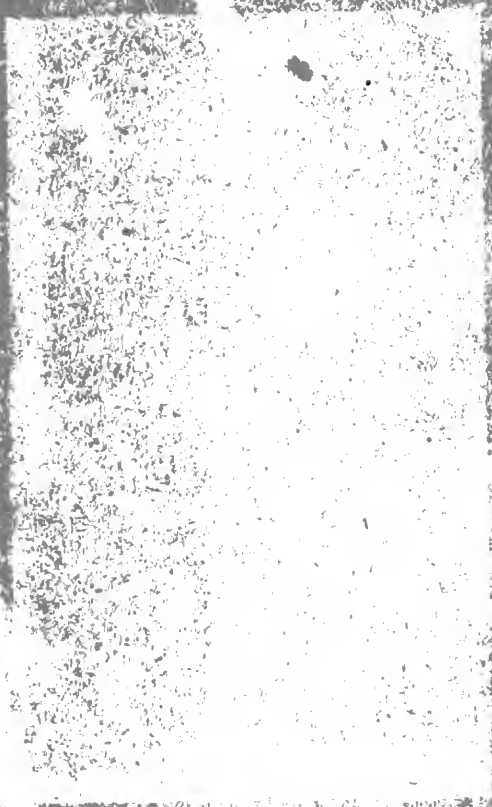
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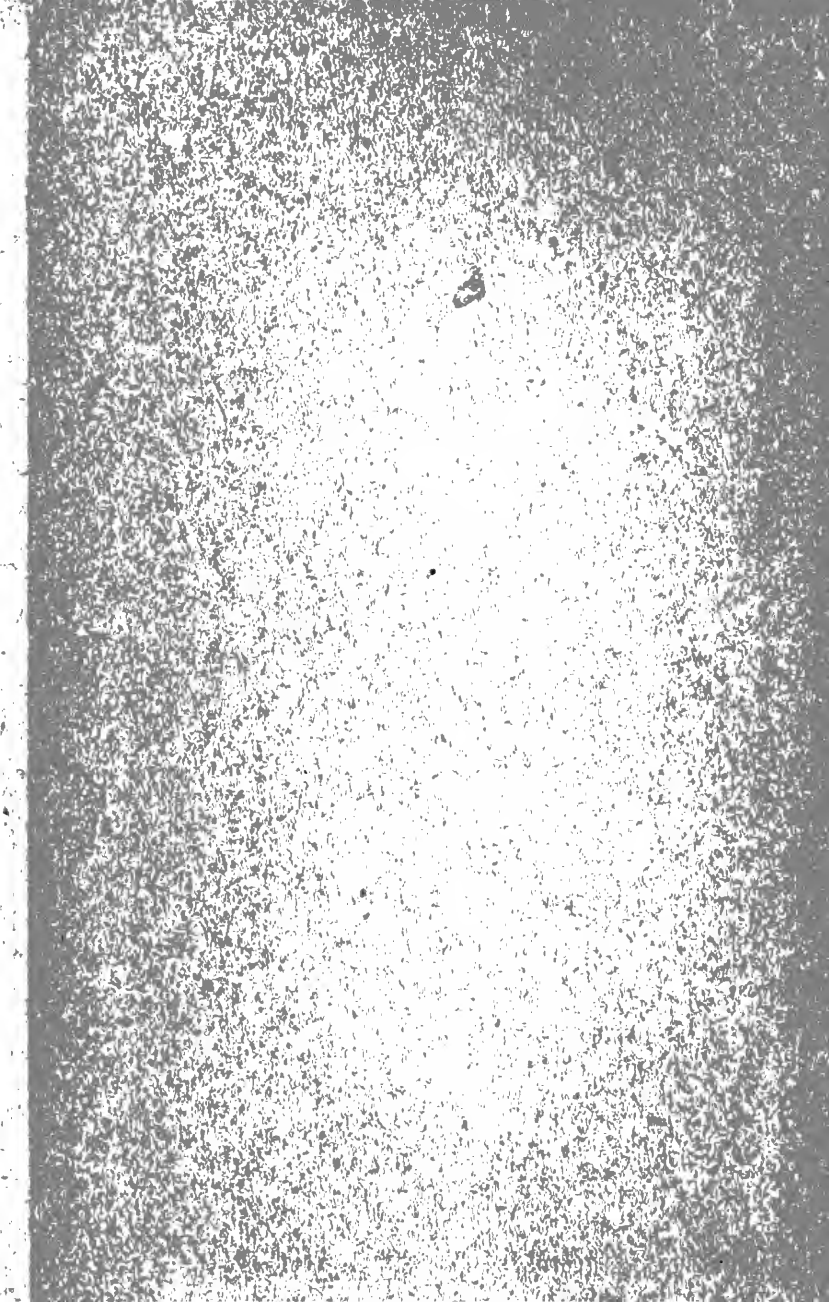


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STREETS
AND OTHER VERSES

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Douglas Gording

STREETS

and other verses

By
DOUGLAS GOLDRING

LONDON
SELWYN & BLOUNT, LTD.
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To
LOVERS OF LONDON
THIS RAGGED OFFERING

614454

Author's Note

OF the pieces contained in this collection fifteen are here printed in book form for the first time. The remainder are taken from the four volumes of verse which I have issued during the past ten years, all of which are now out of print.

"A Triumphal Ode" first appeared in *The Poetry Chapbook*, and "Post-Georgian Poet in Search of a Master," in *Coterie*.

D. G.

November 1st, 1920.

*THIS great grey city that bred me and mine—
Supreme, mysterious, dirty and divine—
Is made up all of contrast, light and gloom.*

*It has green hills and parks where flowers bloom ;
And shadowed pathways where young lips are shy
And warm hands tangle while the night slips by ;
Deserts of humble brick, resigned and drear ;
And crowded taverns, full of noise and beer ;
Thronged streets where jostle theatre and hotel,
And stately terraces where rich folk dwell. . . .*

*It has black alleys, and most dismal plains
Crossed by long, steady, fire-emitting trains ;
Foul slums and palaces, prisons and spires
And suburbs where the jaundiced clerk expires.*

*But love and hope are always with us, too :
And such bright eyes, to make the sky seem blue !*

*All of my life I have spent up and down
Adventurously, in this unending town,
And magic things have seen at Fortune Green
And fairies loitering in a grove at Sheen ;
Chelsea made crimson in the sunset's glare ;
The dawn transfiguring even Russell Square. . . .*

*And I have watched, all through a summer's day,
The brown-winged barges loaded up with hay,
And seen the heavy cargo-steamers slide
Past Woolwich Ferry, with the flowing tide ;
Found joy in travel on a motor 'bus,
And glowing worlds Within the Radius !*

*And so, for songs, my heart must needs repeat
The cries and whispers of the London street.*



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Part I



Streets

CHURCH STREET wears ever a smile, from having
watched bright belles
Coming home with young men, after balls, "at all
hours."

Its villas don't mind ; they say, " Go it, young swells,
We've been young, too ! " But Ebenezer Street glowers.

Chapel deacons live here, with side whiskers and pompous
wives,

Who play hymns on Sundays, and deeply deplore
sinful acts.

They're convinced that their neighbours lead scandalous
private lives ;

—That you and I ought to be shot, " if one knew all
the facts."

Goreham Street's sad. Here lives old Jones the poet—
He knew Swinburne and Watts, and has letters from
" dear Charlie Keene."

Loo Isaacs lives here as well, and poor Captain Jowett :
And the " Goreham Street Murder " was over at number
thirteen.

Now George Street (E.C.) strikes a cheerful and strenuous
note ;

It is full of live men of business, of 'buses and noise ;
Of Surbiton gents, very sleek, in top-hat and fur coat ;
And earnest young clerks who perspire, and take classes
for boys.

But Audley Street has a calm and a gently fastidious air !
Here I shall live when I'm rich, with my wife and my
car :

When we are pleased, we'll never shout nor ruffle our
hair,
And a lift of the eyebrow will show how annoyed we
are.

This is where life is lived nobly and sweetly and well :
Here are beauty, all hardly-won things, and courage
and love.

Why people worship the slums and the poor so, I can never
tell,
For it's virtue and baths and good cooking go hand in
glove !

Villas

(Leytonstone)

ALL down Jamaica Road there are small bow windows
Jutting out neighbourly heads in the street,
And in each sits, framed, a quiet old woman.
These watch the couples who pass or meet,

And some have borne sons, now ageing men ;
And most have seen death in their narrow house ;
Heard wedding bells for their grandchildren ;
Seen boys seek the bar for a last carouse ;

And heard wives cry, through thin plaster walls,
And watched babies laugh in the sun, outside.
They treasure things up in their withered old hearts,
And always they sit looking out, with eyes wide.

These queer old women, they watch, as they sit,
Through the whole long day, what happens beneath
They miss not a thing. Sometimes they knit,
And sometimes dream a little, holding their breath.

1910.

Cherry Gardens

(Rotherhithe)

MY man fell in, when he was drunk ;
They'd thrown him out o' the " King's Head."
From Wapping stairs he fell, and sunk.
He was my man ; he's dead.

On the cold slab, a sight to see,
They've laid him out—poor handsome chap—
In Rotherhithe's new mortuary.
His head should dent my lap,

But I mayn't warm him where he lies,
Because I have no ring to show—
Yet I've his bruises on my eyes ;
And bore his child a month ago.

Mare Street, N.E.

IN Mare Street, Hackney, Sunday nights,
My Jim he'd search for souls to save :
Beneath one of them showman's lights
He'd stand up white and brave.

" And who's for Jesus now ? " he'd call,
" And who's for Love that's strong ?
" Repent, believe : there's Heaven for all
" That turns and flees from wrong. . . . "

I wish no harm to my poor Jim,
But God strike Lizzie dead !
'Twas cruel of her to lead the hymn,
With me laid ill, in bed.

They're gone—last month—to Leytonstone ;
Jim has a pulpit there ;
So I'm left hungering here alone,
While *she* joins him in pray'r.

Kingsland Road, N.E.

*AS I went walking down the Kingsland Road
I met an old man, with a very heavy load ;
He had a crooked nose, and one tooth in his head,
And as I went by him he stopped me, and said :*

I'm an old, old man
With a very heavy sack—
But when I was a young 'un
I'd a heavier pack.

Now my eyes are all dim,
But my heart's full of fun ;
Oh ! heavy was my heart
When my eyes were young.

I'd a cartload of trouble
All along o' my wife.
—It was trying to be happy
Made a Hell of my life !

I'm an old, old man
With a gert heavy sack—
But when I was a young 'un
It nigh broke my back !

*When I looked in his eyes I saw that they were blue,
And the skin of his face it was wrinkled through and through.
He had big hairy ears, and his beard it was white :
And twittering and laughing he passed into the night.*

Living-In

(Brixton Rise)

THROUGH the small window comes the roar
Of all the world of light outside :
It is not midnight, yet our door
Is shut on us, and we are tied.

What is he doing now—my dear ?

I left him all on fire for me :

Will he be true ? Oh God, I fear

He'll buy what I would give him free !

Newport Street, E.

DOWN Newport Street, last Sunday night,
Bill stabbed his sweetheart in the breast :
She screamed and fell, a dreadful sight,
And Bill strode on like one possest.

O Love's a curse to them that's young
'Twas all because of love and drink ;
Why couldn't the silly hold her tongue,
Or stop, before she spoke, to think ?

She played with fire, did pretty Nell,
So Bill must hang ere summer's here :
Christ, what a crowd are sent to Hell
Through love, and poverty and beer !

The Spanish Sailor

(*Charlton Vale*) .

THROUGH lines of lights the river glides,
Bestrewn with many a green-eyed ship,
And swiftly down the slinking tides
All night the heavy steamers slip.

Bright shone the moon when he slunk down,
A-sailing to some foreign parts,
Past Greenwich and past Gravesend Town,
And caring nought for broken hearts.

'Twas in July. He kissed and fled :
He stole my all and slipt to sea,
And now I wish that I was dead
—Or that his arms were crushing me.

Outside Charing Cross

(2.35 p.m.)

OF course she's there to see him off—
Trust her for that. Tears in her eyes, enough to
be becoming,
The latest furs, then sympathy, for tea!
And if he's hit, my own, she'll hear it first.
She'll be the one to fly to France,
To bore the Doctor and the Nurse
And drive him mad—if he still lives.

But I, who love him so my heart grows faint,
Who'd gladly bleed to death to save him pain,
Must wait and read the news in some blurred list. . . .
Then, ever the grinning mask, day in, day out,
While she, hard as a stone,
Wears stylish black and tells her lover's son
How "Father died a hero in the War!"

1915.

Saloon Bar, Railway Arms

(Waterloo Road)

THE SERGEANT-MAJOR SPEAKS

NOW you get out, you lousy tart !
Outside's my lawful wife and kids
Turned up to watch the regiment depart,
And all dressed neat, in black.

Why such as you's orl right, maybe,
In time of peace. And I'll allow
We've 'ad some fun, been on the spree—
But now, you slut, it's War.

Think o' your Gord ! That's wot *I* say.
The Missus there's *respectable*—
'Er and the kids. If you don't run away
I'll wring yer neck, yer cow ! 'Ear me ?

You ought to be ashamed of yerself,
Turning up like this and making trouble !
Come on, chuck it ! Don't 'owl. Give us a slobber
then. . . .
Now 'op it—poor little swine.

Mrs. Skeffington Calhus

MRS. SKEFFYNGTON CALHUS has three sons
killed in the war,

(But to see her brave, sweet face, you would never guess
it.)

She has "given" some nephews as well, and cousins galore ;
"And if one feels sad," she says, "one ought to suppress
it."

She belongs to two Funds, some Committees, and several
clubs,

Where she states what she's done for England, with
modest pride ;

And she works like a black at recruiting outside the pubs ;
And is always ready to tell "how her dear ones died."

There were three of them—Bob, Jack and Arthur—hand-
some men ;

So good to their mother, so courteous, and brave, and
kind !

Well—she bred them for England ! It was God's will,
Amen ;

For her sorrow on earth, a reward in Heaven she would
find.

But Lily (the third from the left in "The Beauty-girl's
Glide")

Belonged to no clubs or committees, wasn't noble at all ;
And the night of Jack's death, in the wings, she broke down
and cried

Till her face was a sight and she couldn't go on for the
Ball.

She hadn't bred him for England, nor looked for rewards
"up above" ;

He was all that she cared for on earth ; and she railed at
Fate

And called down a curse on those who had slain her love.

The " for England " touch she couldn't appreciate.

But Lily, of course, was only a simple soul.

She lacked Mrs. Calhus's exquisite self-control.

Little Houses

(Hill Street, Knightsbridge)

LITTLE houses, though prim, have often a secret
glance

That can speak to a heart outside—as one speaks to
me—

And even their close-drawn curtains seem to enhance

The charm of their sly reserve, of their mystery. . . .

I like to walk through the Square to your quiet street,

And look at your windows—with just a suspicion of
pride—

For I may go in, when I dare, and sit at your feet,

But the people who pass can't guess what it's like
inside.

They haven't a notion—but I see your small armchair

And your dog, by the fire, and your novel thrown on
the floor ;

And I know there will always be flowers when you are
there,

And always a smile for me, when I open your door !

Malise-Robes

THE address is good—10A, North Molton Street—
I'm clever at the trade, and doing well ;
Haven't a single cause for discontent !
Wilfrid is pleased : I'm safe : why mourn (you say)
The old days when I loved him, and was poor ?
Ah, why ! Fool, fool—to ask one that.
I love him still, I think. Sometimes he comes
And takes me off to Paris for a week ;
Flatters himself I'm " doing well at last " ;
That he's not brought me harm ; but, rather, good.
It ought to be enough ! And yet, and yet—
You see I'm thirty-five, and I've no child. . . .
True, I've the shares in " Malise Limited,"
And that's worth fifteen hundred solid pounds a year. . .

I'll marry my Paris buyer. He's a good sort :
And we'll soon be very rich. . . . But I'm so tired.

I wish he'd only kept me in a flat
Somewhere in Maida Vale ; come once a week
And let me cook the dinner. . . . Votes ! Good God !
The way to manage women is the Turk's. . . .

The Young Married Couple

(Muswell Hill)

THE Home of the young married couple is pleasant
and clean,

They receive me together. They say "Will I please
come in,"

And "not mind" some small thing (which I have not
seen).

Then : "Dinner is ready now" ; and "shall we begin ?"

They have a small daughter, and not too much money.

They say

That things must look up, by and by. They are merry
and brave,

They have grey days and bright days and days of play ;

And they always enjoy together the things that they
have.

And often I envy my friends, as I sit and read

All alone with my books and my thoughts, without
child or wife :

And I think I should like to marry very much indeed—

If only the marriage sentence weren't for life.

First Floor Back

LITTLE room with the stone grey walls and the dusty
books

And a stone paved yard outside, and a high brick wall
(And beyond the wall the trains to and fro passing
All day and all night)—

How I regret you now, little room with no view !
I shall never see you again.

There I was all alone with my own wild heart.

And now I have lent my heart : it is no more mine.

There I was free to soar or to sink, no one speaking a
word,

Nothing holding me back, or distracting, or bidding me
think

Of callers " coming at five."

No one ever called, in that small bleak room.

No one called, it was cold. All alone

Came the night to me

And the bitter, grey London morning.

And I was rich, with my bare grey walls,

Rich, with my thoughts and dreams,

Who now am poor—

Imprisoned by plenty and by the years.

Maisonnettes

(Harrow Road)

THE houses in Windermere Street are let off in
floors,

Which perhaps is the reason it always seems so to
"swarm."

Little groups of girls and young men gather round its
front doors

And keen eyes at all windows observe who is "coming
to harm."

Every one in the street knew at once about poor Lizzie
Brown !

They saw the young chap she took up with, and "knew
how 'twould be";

And they know why the blinds of the house at the corner
are down,

*And who pays the second floor's rent, at a hundred and
three.*

Walworth Road

DREAMS fairly haunt the Walworth Road (S.E.) ;
Ride on the bonnets of the passers-by ;
Slide down the chimneys, and fly in between
Warped, weasened doors and well-worn lintel-boards ;
Come in at windows and invade small rooms
To chatter archly in old women's ears,
Making them laugh cracked laughter, deep in the throat,
And weep with sweet, long, memorable thoughts. . . .

They make bent grandfathers recall the day
They played the fool in the sun, under the sky,
And were the deuce with women, and finer chaps
" Than ever you get, in these degenerate times. . . . "

And then, they love to hover where maids sleep,
Stirring the dewy lashes of soft eyes,
Dimpling warm cheeks and parting tender lips.
And in small ears, half-hidden in tangled curls,
They tinkle such sly secrets of delight,
That, when the sun cries " shame " to slugabeds,
These wake, cooing like doves, with little trills and laughs
And memories of a kiss, in that dream world
Where " he " had swapped his bowler for a crown,
And was a prince, and rode a great white horse ! . . .

To the strong lads they whisper of the wars,
Of glory and red coats ; or of bright waves
Tumbling, a foam of white, over a ship's dipped nose,
In some tumultuous, splendid, sun-bathed sea ;
Or of adventures, where the world is warm
And palm-trees stand above a glittering beach
Under deep skies ; where you may chance to meet
Paul and Virginia ; or an Arab horde—
Slave-traders all, with muskets damascened—
Or talk to small brown girls with nothing on. . . .

Again, they tell of Rovers, from Sallee,
With pistols in their belts, who cry "Hands Up!"
But get a punch on the nose from British boys,
Who steal their long feluccas with tall sails,
And go adventuring through the burning blue,
And meet a flight of porpoises and a dolphin,
And make an island (as the daylight fades)
Which has a fierce volcano in her midst
And a little white port, with clustering white houses,
And pirate vessels in her anchorage. . . .

They are brave tales you broider, elfin dreams!
Yet when the dawn awakens shining eyes,
The same brown trams are surging to the Bridge,
The same thin, grimy trees stand looking on;
Nothing is changed. But oh, the day would be
How dead without you!—in the Walworth Road.

The Country Boy

ERE Jack went up to London
He held his head full high :
His step was firm, his shoulders square
And bright and bold his eye.

And ere he went to London
Our maidens pleased him well,
As little Rose from Yeovil,
And dozens more, can tell.

But now the London ladies
Have stolen all his thoughts,
And wonderful rich presents
He gives to those he courts.

But O, the smile has left his lips,
His eyes are tired and dim,
And he's forgotten lads at home
Who've not forgotten him.

1908.

The Letter

“ O, THE spring is sweet in London, Rose ; the sun
shines in the Park

Very near as warm and happy as it used to shine
at home—

What's the use of sitting sighing in my bedroom cold
and dark

When there's many a girl will walk with me, if only
asked to come ?

“ There's lots of pretty faces, Dear, in all this jostling
throng,

There's the girls I see at lunch-time in the tea-shop
or the street,

And the lady in the boarding-house, who sings me many
a song

In the drawing-room after dinner, O, her voice is
soft and sweet !

“ And I haven't always wandered, all alone, with thoughts
of you,

And I've kissed sometimes (not often) other lips, my
Rose, than yours,

But I'm not a faithless villain—just a lad whose years
are few,

And who can't afford to waste them sitting sorrowful
indoors.

“ Don't think I have forgotten you, so true and good
and kind,

It's only that life's different now, a harder thing and
strange :

This London alters everything and makes your soul go
blind,

And the office work's so tiring, Lord ! you long for
any change.

“ So that’s why I write this letter : that you shouldn’t
think it right

Just because we used to promise things and kiss, in
days gone by,

To refuse the other fellows when they come to woo, at
sight.

O ! London eats your heart and soul—my little Rose,
Good-bye.”

Lodgings

(Bloomsbury)

AS I climb these musty stairs,
To my garret near the roof—
Past the ladies singing airs
From the latest Opéra-bouffe—
I can see her little feet
Twinkling in the brilliant light,
I can hear the words so sweet
That she said for my delight,
When the whirling dance was over
And she joined me in the night.

As I climb these hard-worn stairs
To my garret near the roof,
All her pretty, subtle airs,
As she kept me half-alooof,
Fill my thoughts and banish cares ;
I can hear her soft reproof
When I kissed her unawares,
As I climb these weary stairs
To my garret near the roof.

" *L'Ile de Java* "

(*To Madame Josse*)

MADAME, from out the hurrying throng
Two boys have come to drink and talk ;
And one will make a little song
And one a drawing, done in chalk.

When all goes wayward with our art
And beauty dances out of sight,
It's good to still a hungry heart
With chatter far into the night.

Here through the grey-blue smoke that twines,
Gay visions come to tired eyes ;
How bright the Isle of Java shines
Beneath what deep, cerulean skies !

Transported to that dazzling clime
Where sunlight scalds a silver beach—
We can forget the flight of time,
And falterings of line and speech.

We can forget our isle of dream
Is no more real than thoughts that fly—
And follow close the magic gleam
Which charms and haunts us till we die.

And so from out the hurrying throng
We two have come to drink and talk ;
And I have made a little song,
And he a drawing, done in chalk !

1908.

The Poplars

I

OH fluttering hand, so white and warm and shy,
Oh eyes that have imprisoned a stray beam
Stol'n from the moon! Oh tremulous heart's cry,
From lips new parted in some childish dream!

See, Dear, the poplars tremble. They are very tall,
They stand like pillars against the darkling sky,
And over the little lake their shadows fall. . . .
See, through the gloom, the great white swans glide by.
If you can love this little, why not all?
Ah! brooding mouth that never will tell me why. . . .

II

Oh, it is still, out here, under the starry glow:
Your lips to mine you give, and my hand is in yours,
And your body is mine if I wish it . . . and yet, I know
That the treasure I seek you deny,
And the heart of you, soul of you, keep.

III

I would know why you lift your head of a sudden, like
this,
And turn it (so finely poised) till the light picks out
The shape of your moulded neck, of your hair so sweet
to kiss,
And the line of your forehead and nose and lips that
pout.

Now are they blue as night, your veiled large eyes,
But pale fire lights them, fire o' the moon.
Oh, why do you gasp, with little tangled cries,
And why do you seize my hand to let it fall so soon?

1911.

West End Lane

NOW through the dripping, moonless night,
Up West End Lane and Frognal Rise,
They trace their footsteps by the light
Of love that fills their weary eyes.

"Nellie, though Town's a tiresome place,
With far less joy in it than tears,
To set my lips to your warm face
Is worth a sight of dismal years!"

"And I'm so happy, Jack, with you,"
She whispers softly. . . . "See, the rain
Has stopped, the clouds are broken through,
The stars are shining clear again!"

Pausing, they gaze across the Heath
Submerged in fog—a dim hush'd lake
Wherein the wretched might seek death,
And lovers drown for dear Love's sake.

Then clasping hands, and touching lips,
They dream beneath great sombre trees,
Whence large and solemn-falling drips
Are shaken by the restless breeze.

"Oh, nothing's half so sweet, my dear,
As kisses in the quiet night:
Lean close, and let me hold you near,
Put out your arms, and clasp me tight!"

“ Why, should we wait, so cold and wise ?

We're only human, Nell, we two ;

And even if love fades and dies—

I shall remember this : won't you ? ”

Hampstead

I

UP from the desolate streets—the green, sweet hill !
(All crossed with scented paths, shut in by garden
walls
And hung with shadowy trees—dark paths and still.)
O, open plateau, glittering pond, and love that calls !

Here, ah ! here, to be gods, to forget !
Here to leave home and troubles that soil and blear.
Under the golden moon, when the sun has set,
Here to forget and kiss—O joy bought dear !

II

I love those small old houses, with bright front doors,
And shy windows that look on the Heath ; they are
quiet and gay :
Old books, old silver they have (that my heart adores)
And their women are slim, with soft voices ; and kind
things they say.

Their lives are one exquisite tea—with the lamp unlit,
In autumn and winter. In summer a rose
Climbs in through the open window, caressing it ;
And always there are petit-fours, music, and dreams—
and repose.

III

Fields where the ugly, with divine-grown eyes
Bloom all to beauty of soft look and word.
Trees, amorous trees, that fold maternal arms
Over joined lips, and halting vows half-heard.

Do you know Branch Hill ? There are steps to the right
 When you reach the top, which climb to a walk
 Shaded by elm-trees of great girth and height ;
 And there are seats there, where lovers talk.

And all in front is a valley, wide and deep—
 In summer a place of murmurs and laughing sighs :
 In winter a sea of mists and deathly sleep,
 Pierced by faint sobs and drowning, desolate cries. . . .

It rained, the wet poured from the leaves ;
 They by the churchyard ; entered in
 And sheltered underneath the eaves—
 So sweetly close ; yet firm her chin.

Her warmth, her fragrance, thrilled his blood ;
 And she—half frightened and half kind—
 Whispered the warning words “ be good,”
 But left his venturous arm entwined.

When the shower stopped his hopes sank low,
 Farewell kind walls and darkling spire !
 They walked forlornly down Church Row ;
 Her eyes grown big ; his lips on fire.

Down Frogmal Lane to Fortune Green—
 There parted, by a watery moon.
 His heart went throbbing “ Might have been,”
 But hers a-trembling “ Not too soon.”

At Jack Straw's Castle, streaks of yellow light
 Pour from the bar upon a preacher's head
 Who howls unheeded warnings to the night :
 Two p'licemen say he ought to be in bed.

Lonely young men walk, eager, to and fro
And search the passing faces—some find mates ;
Against the railings leans a giggling row ;
An amorous chauffeur puffs his horn and waits.

The crowds move up and down, white dresses gleam ;
Some strolling niggers play a tune that trips,
While couples meet and glance, then leave the stream,
And youths look plaintively at young girls' lips.

VII

So, to the Pines. Ah, here, in the hush'd blue
You may spy cities, dim in the dim sky,
Stretching strange roadways to the inner view.
See ! See !—oh, loved one, see ! Hope shall not
die. . . .

Oak Hill Way

HE : May I stop and kiss you here,
O, my dear ?

She : You may stop, but I'll not stay :
I'm going homewards now—Good day !

He : Here's a lane, and quiet, too :
'Tis where the folks from London woo,
Two and two.

She : It leads to Kilburn, where I live :
I promised I'd be back at five—
I must be quick or I'll be late,
No, no—I dare not wait.

He : See, Maggie, it's called Lover's Lane,
So other's girls are kind, that's plain.
This love's a thing that all men know ;
There, link your arm in my arm—so.

She : I didn't think you were so silly :
Walk up—it's chilly.

He : O, since in life there's little bliss,
And most of it lies in a kiss—
Don't turn those cruel lips away,
But just one moment, Maggie, stay !

. . . .

Lor ! here's the blessed street. Oh ! why . . .

She : You foolish lad, don't *ask*. Good-bye !

Spaniards'

THE moon shone withering, wild and white,
And ruddy gleamed the bars,
And far below, the city's light
Streamed up to meet the stars.

"Look down," ses Tom, "them streets that shine,
And look, the gaudy sky !
By God, to-night, my girl, you're mine "
—And glad enough was I.

Oh, why did blow so soft and warm
That breeze on Spaniards' Road !
I never thought to take no harm,
Nor bear so hard a load.

1913.

Richmond Park

I

WHAT do I want with your little, shrinking love ?
See, I have a star in my hand, that I snatched
from the blue above,
I have the moon under my arm ; and dreams in my heart
that cry—
And, look, the glow of my city, my home—like blood-red
fire in the sky !
You cannot bind me with cords, while you give or withhold
little kisses,
I will fly off and forget. . . .
Ah !

II

How can you tell ? you say. Your heart cries “ wait ” :
You will not answer now, “ it grows so late ”—
And I stand, hungry, by your small, green gate !

Dear, if you would but trust love’s whispered word !
Listen a little while—you turn away.
What ? Your head droops. . . . You are frightened ?
Run in and hide.

Westminster Bridge

(June Night)

THE sea-gulls wheel aloft and sink,
Slide swiftly circlewise and fade
To where the West is olive-pink
And rosy mists the river shade.

And sullen, purposeful and strange
The silent stream glides on, beneath
The patient bridge that will not change,
And all the city holds its breath.

Then gazing towards the sunken sun
A pale girl eyes his lingering gleam,
A soul whose little day is done,
For whom will come no night, no dream.

1908.

Gladstone Terrace

A VERY sordid street of red and green—
Red houses and green paint—but in between
Each villa lies a little garden space
Cherished on Summer Sundays. See his face,
(A two-pound Clerk next morning) as he sweats,
Tending the strawberries which his baby eats !

A fool is he, not virtuous, but content :
He hears no wings of God omnipotent,
Nor feels the stirring of His mighty breath.
Yet scorn not Gladstone Terrace in your pride,
For see, what hopes and longings here reside,
What gracious mysteries of love and death.

Front Doors

(Bayswater)

FROM Notting Hill to Hyde Park Square
The streets have an inhuman air,
The houses—(six imposing floors ;
Dark, formidable, fierce front doors ;
Tall windows, sightless, sealed and blind :
Ball-room or billiard-room behind)—
Must shelter, they're so vast and cold,
None but the ugly and the old. . . .

Watch, as you wander hereabout,
The people who go in and out !
Sleek-bellied men in varnished hats,
Fur coats, check trousers, gleaming spats,
Flock in procession, pompous, grand,
Or drive in motors to the Strand ;
And massive women, towering high,
Dart glances from a hawklike eye,
Pause, sniffing the post-luncheon breeze,
Then drive (to train for several teas),
Snub the companion, pat the dog,
Sneeze, cough and grumble at the fog.

Jerusalem no more golden is
Than gloomy Bayswater, I wis !
Her portals strike an awe profound—
“ Fly, loiterers, this is holy ground !
Quell impropriety of tone ;
Hawkers and circulars begone ”—
For here the ruling race reside
And guard our pledges and their pride.

Her doors are sour : they never smile,
But icily stare for mile on mile—
Vast, supercilious, gleaming, hard :
Fastened securely, bolted, barred !

The Ballad of the Brave Lover

(Thames Embankment)

SHE wandered by the river's brink,
Her stricken heart stood still :
She listened for his hastening step
With mind to win or kill.

From Ipswich up to London town
Long days, long nights walked she :
And now had tracked the soldier down
Who caused her shame to be.

She could not breathe, her throat grew dry,
Her soldier looked so brave and strong :
" Why Moll, my girl," she heard him cry,
" What brings you here along ? "

" From Ipswich, Dick, I've brought the son,"
She moaned, " your broken promise gave."
He looked and laughed : " Poor little one !
I've used you ill, I have."

She sank, and saw him smile good-bye—
She who had thought to kill or win.
He was too fine, too bold to die,
The weak must suffer for his sin.

The Quarry

ALL down that dismal villa'd street,
With ugly green front doors,
I'd to and fro, on tiptoe feet
And wonder which was yours !

And when the bedroom candles shone
And night fell deep and dark,
The road would fade, and I'd press on
Across some faery park.

And you before me, you so near !
—Elusive, 'mid the trees.
I the bold horseman, you the deer—
What nights, what dreams were these

Must Love and Beauty always fly
The eager arms of men ?
Oh, I shall hunt you till I die,
And when I live again !

In a Taxi

COME, give your hands to me, and lean
Your dear bright head against my coat.
Let me tear loose the furs that screen
The ivory column of your throat.

Now, yield your hungry lips to mine,
You passionate child! You cling so tight,
The blood goes to my head like wine,
As we race, breathless, through the night.

How the time flies! We're nearly there.
Now grow sedate and proud once more—
Put back your furs, bind up your hair,
But pause, awhile, outside your door.

No one can hear! So now, good-bye!
Darling, to crush you, in the gloom,
With kisses, would be ecstasy . . .
"Shh! mother's moving in her room!"

1908.

In Praise of London

*I, THE son of London men,
Give thanks to London once again.
Here was I born ; and I will die
Under this friendly leaden sky—
Like grandfer's grandfer, so will I.*

City of beauty, flower of cities all—
Where " Themmes " runs swiftly, and the 'buses roar
(Even down the stately reaches of Whitehall)
While chocolate trams invade the Surrey shore—
Yours is a glamour which the years enhance
And in your grimy streets lives all romance !

When I go out into the world
To see the wonders there unfurl'd,
Though marvelling much, when I lie down
My thoughts fly back to my own town.
Memories of familiar streets
Comfort me under foreign sheets
And Cockney humour brings the laugh
When *bocks* of foreign beer I quaff.

My thoughts fly home. I see again
Remembered houses, roads and men.
The great town grows before my eyes,
I hear its murmurs and its sighs,
Travel, in dreams, the streets I knew
And roam from Greenwich Park to Kew.

I love to think of bland Pall Mall
(Where Charles made love to Pretty Nell)
And rich South Audley Street, and Wapping,
And Bond Street and the Christmas shopping,
Knightsbridge, the Inner Circle train,
And Piccadilly and Park Lane ;

Kensington, where " nice " people live
Who give you tea (top-hat) at five ;
And Church Street, and that little path
Which leads to the Broad Walk and the Pond
Where boys sail boats and sparrows bath—
And the dear woodland slope beyond. . . .

I love Hyde Park, the Serpentine,
And Marble Arch at half-past nine,
The graceful curve of Regent Street,
The Queen Anne charm of Cheyne Walk
(Its church, with Polyphemus' eye,
And those great chimneys, climbing the sky !)—
The Inns of Court and that discreet
Tavern where Johnson used to talk ;
The bustle of Fleet Street and the blare
Of Oxford Circus, Leicester Square ;
Charing Cross Road, with books for all
In shop and window, case and stall ;
Imperial Westminster, the Stores,
Where Colonel Tompkins buys cigars ; *
The Athenæum, where he snores ;
The " Troc," and several other bars ;
The hall where Marie makes us roar
With jokes our consciences deplore
And where dear Vesta Tilley sings
—Our " London Idol," bless her heart !—
Where Robey leaps on from the wings,
And good old X forgets her part.

Then who can think of Richmond Hill
In summertime, without a thrill ?—
Remembering days with Rose or Nan
When friendship ended, love began,
And glamorous evenings in the park
Under the beech trees hush'd and dark—

The deer at gaze with glistening eyes,
The London lights aglow in the skies
(But far away) and no sound there
Save the caught breath and little sighs
That come from joy too great to bear.

Richmond, all London lovers know
Your upland glades, and how, below,
The bright Thames twines about your knees
Through the green tracery of your trees. . . .
And just as I on Whitsunday,
Have brought my girl to spend the day,
So to your hill my fathers came
And, sure, my son will do the same.

* * *

What sights there are, for those who know,
In every part of this great city !
Our men are mixed, it's true, but oh,
Are not our London maidens pretty ?

Look ! you may see them everywhere—
Laughing in ball-rooms in Mayfair,
At tea at Ranelagh, or walking
On Sunday in Hyde Park and talking
The latest nonsense ! What a sight,
In frocks adorable and costly !
At Epping too (East-enders mostly)
You'll see good London girls at play ;
On Hampstead Heath—and every day
They troop in crowds up Chancery Lane. . . .

I'll own, some Brixton girls are plain,
The Ealing girls are proud and silly,
They're a queer lot in Piccadilly
And—personally—I can't stand
The huzzies who infest the Strand.
But in the bulk, far though you roam,
You'll find no girls like ours at home.

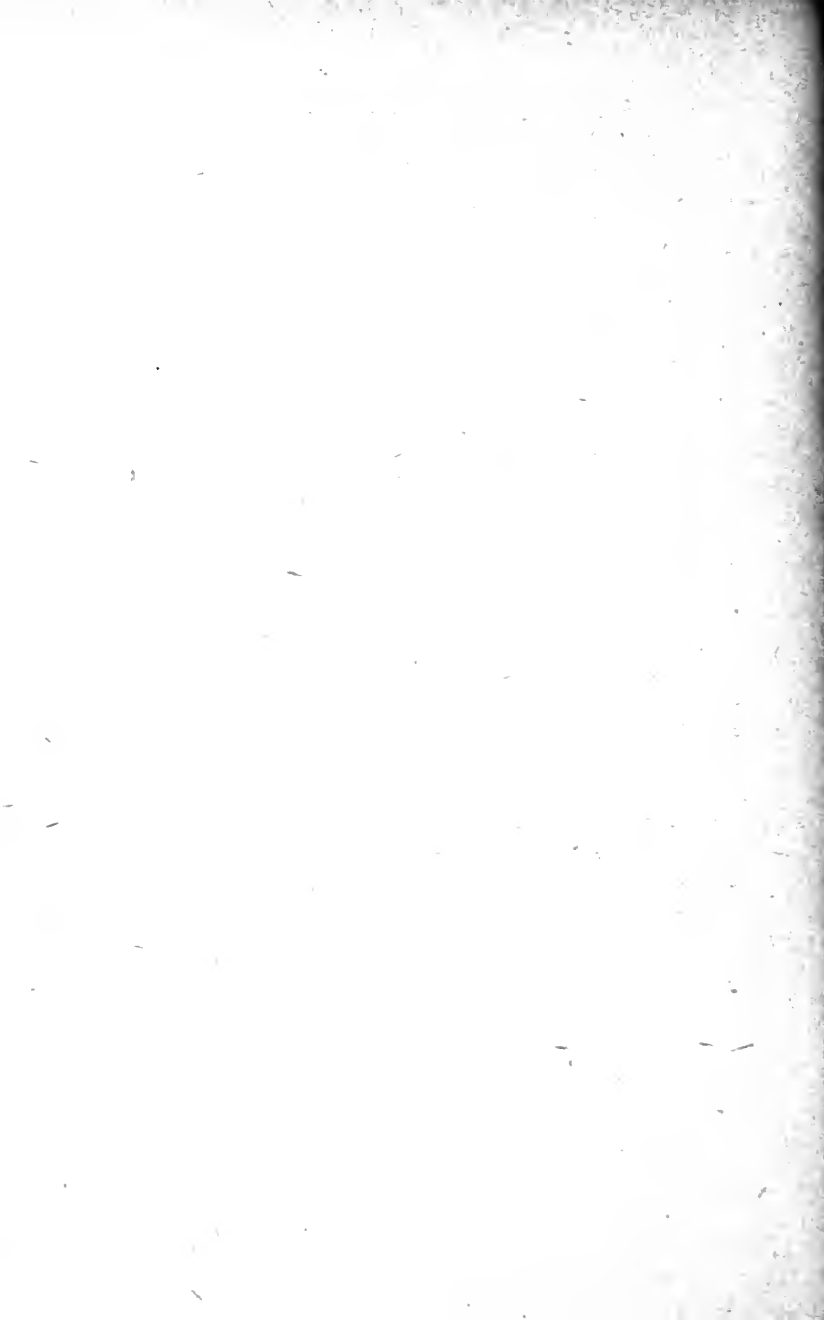
Then what good cheer is London cheer
When welcoming the infant year ;
On Derby day ; or Christmas even ;
Or when Aunt Jane pops off to Heaven !

In friendly restaurant or grill
You drink your bottle, eat your fill,
Digest, while watching Russian dancers,
Drive next to supper at some pub,
Then mingle with the rag-time prancers,
In a night café—called a club.

And so to bed, should it be June,
While the birds sing their morning tune
And the sun flushes all the East
And tips with rose chimney and roof.
Heigho ! the ending of the feast—
The kiss good-bye, and no reproof !

I cannot praise as I would praise
The mother of my nights and days.
Mine only in rough notes to sing
Songs of the streets from which I spring.

*I, the son of London men,
Give thanks to London once again.
Here was I born and I will die
Under this friendly leaden sky—
Like grandfer's grandfer, so will I.*



Part II

Highbrow Hill

LONDONIAN Athens, I, thy hill sublime
Will celebrate, in my unfeeling rhyme !

In Grave Tannhauser Street and New Thought Lane,
Parsifal Avenue, and Shavian Road
Dwells High Intelligence, with massive brain,
Bearing like Atlas an almighty load—
The burden of decision : " Yes " or " No " ?—
Can Nichols stay, or Vachel Lindsay go ?

Here dwells the last arbitrament of art.
How great is *he* ? Is that one large or small ?
Here is the wanton poet made to smart,
Here the uncurbed romancer takes his fall ;
Here they deal faithfully with Squiff and Noggs
And here (for dinners) puff Sir Roller Loggs.

Fresh every day, when dawn makes Highbrow Hill
Softened and rosy, blithe and gentle and sweet,
The Intellectuals their quivers fill
With poisonous darts, to fire from safe retreat.

Biffkin and Briggs and Solomon *and* Snooks
Must be put down, for they lead *awful lives*,
And any simple souls who read their books
Might kiss their housemaids or desert their wives.
Earth must be purged, be cleaned from this disease !
(And England does what Highbrow Hill decrees.)

Post-Georgian Poet in Search of a Master

I HAD been well brought up : I liked the best.
My prose was modelled on Rebecca West,
My " little things " erstwhile reflected tone,
My brother poets claimed me as their own.
In those blithe days, before the War began—
Ah me, I was a safe young Georgian !

Now all is chaos, all confusion.
Bolshes have cast E. M. from his high throne :
Wild women have rushed in, and savage Yanks
Blather of Booth and Heaven : and T. S. E.
Uses great words that are as Greek to me.
Tell me the Truth, and ah, forgo these pranks—
Whom must I imitate ? Who's really It ?
On whose embroidered footstool should I sit ?

There's Podgrass now—he seems a coming man ;
Writes unintelligible stuff, half French, half Erse.
He told me Philomela had technique
But not much feeling ; Crashaw knew his trade,
But Keats had no idea of writing verse . . .
The thing to read (he said) had just come out,
His latest work, entitled " Bloody Shout."

And then there's Father Michael, Secker's pal,
Who's left dear Sylvia for the Clergy-house.
Michael lives sumptuously : silver, old oak,
Incunabula, the Yellow Book, Madonnas, Art ;
Excited wobblings on the brink of Rome ;
The " Inner Life," birettas, candles, Mass ;
Fun with Church Times and Bishops ; four hair shirts,
And Mr. Percy Dearmer's Parson's Book.
He talked to me of Antinomianism

And stirred the incense, while two candles burned,
Then read aloud his works, with eye upturned.
(Somehow I felt I'd heard it all before—
When I was "boat-boy," in a pinafore.)

Are Sitwells really safe? Is Iris Tree
A certain guide to higher poesy?
Can Nichols be relied on, for a lead;
Or should I thump it with Sassoon and Read?
Or would it not be vastly better fun
To write of Nymphs, with Richard Aldington?
Or shall I train, and nervously aspire
To join with Edward Shanks and J. C. Squire
—A modest "chorus" in a well-paid choir?

I've thought of J. M. Murry and Sturge Moore,
I've thought of Yeats (I thought of him before).
I've toyed with Aldous Huxley and Monro—
I don't know where I am, or where to go.

Oh, mighty Mr. Gosse! Unbend, I pray!
Guide one poor poet who has lost his way. . . .

Merveilleuses des nos Jours

(1914)

“ I WILL now call on Alberic Morphine to give us a reading.” . . .

The rows of young women look up ; their eyes glisten ;
they shiver

With the kind of emotion that's really very misleading.

All have fine eyes, yellow faces, vile clothes and “a liver.”

They smoke a great deal, bathe little, and wear no stays ;

Their artistic garments are made on the Grecian plan ;

They flock in their crowds to the latest “ poetic ” plays ;

And aspire to a union of souls—with some pimply young man.

Daisymead

THE most intense resort in Highbrow Green
(Where only those who *do* things may be seen)
Is known as Crookedwych—a sweet retreat,
Serene and sunny, quite unlike a *street*.
Herein is "Daisymead," the Brownes' abode,
Where Jones encountered highbrows à la mode.

Jones was a very harmless sort of man,
Not made on any esoteric plan,
And when he struck this sanctuary of art
Poor Jones felt quite unequal to his part.

Art maidens with short hair and naked toes
Deprived him of his hat. They wore old rose
And sang about their "little turtle dove"
And asked him if he'd "sow the seeds of love?"
(They were the Misses Browne). "I've come to call. . . ."

"Then follow, to the house-place, sir," they cried,
"And make you featly welcome. Ma's inside."
He followed. Ma received him in the hall.
"I'm seventeen come Sunday, fol-de-lol!"
She trilled untruly, pouring out the tea
From leadless teapot into leadless cups.
Then, "fol-de-lol-de-fol-de-diddle-dee,"

—Handing nut tabloids to the waiting pups.
And more, about the "wraggle gipsies, O."

Jones murmured, "Pray excuse me. I must go.
I think I am unwell . . . the walk too much.
Proteid? No thank you. No, I never touch
Food before dinner . . . I can find the door."
He found it and he fled. Ah, never more!

Benevolence

MRS. MURGATROYD MARTIN thinks only of doing good :

That is all that she lives for—to succour the *poor, poor, poor*.

She wants them to lead nobler lives (that is understood) :

To the world of Culture she opens them wide a door.

She tells them of Pater and Pankhurst, of Tagore and Wilde ;

Of “ Man-made-laws ” and the virtues of proteid peas ;
Of Folk-Song, and Art and of sterilised milk for the child ;
Of the joys of the Morris Dance, and of poetry teas.

And when the vile husbands get tipsy, on Saturday nights,
She goes round next morning and gives them a piece of her mind,

And rouses the downtrodden wives—and when this leads to fights

And black eyes, and bad language, she says : “ But I meant to be kind ! ”

Mr. Reginald Hyphen

(St. James's Street)

MR. REGINALD HYPHEN is terribly "one of us ;"
He was born with a mouth just made for a silver
spoon,

And he's always "dwdedfully late" when he comes to dine.
The thought of the Middle Classes makes him swoon,
And he never will dance unless he is sure of the wine—
And O, it was such an affair, when he took a 'bus !

And yet he's not only a butterfly, carefully smart,
He *thinks* a great deal, and has a devotion to Art.
He has read some Meredith, too—"Rather neat in its
way"—

And perhaps, if he's time, he will "do something like it
—some day."

She-Devil

(Davies Street)

WHITE arms, Love, you have, and thin fingers with
glittering nails,

And the soft blue smoke curls up from your parted mouth !
The delicate rose of your cheeks never varies nor pales,
And your frocks and your furs are perfection—devourer
of youth !

It is thrilling to think of your room and you, wicked,
inside—

Adorable snake, with a snake's unflickering eyes,
And an intimate smile (to share which, fools have died)
And lips soft as a girl's and like a siren's, wise !

Devourer of youth ! You are never alone by your fire,
You have always a boy there, who thinks you a goddess,
ill-used,

And adores you with passion, and brings you the gifts
you desire—

And the fiercer he burns, Dear, the better he keeps
you amused !

Ritz

(*July, 1914*)

WHITE teeth, neat black moustache and lovely eyes—
Face bronzed and beautiful, like a young god—
Tired Rollo is the dreaming school girl's prize.

He leans against the wall, perhaps will dance
If they ask very nicely: sweet young things!
He's "an observer," and he can't conceal
He's frightfully bored with all this sort of crowd.
He prefers artists, men of genius;
He has a soul above the idle rich—
"A looker-on, you know, at the world's game."
Rude persons laugh. Adonis, rather hot,
Twirls the ineffable moustache and smiles.
—He is so much that other men are not.

1914.

A Triumphal Ode

*Written on the occasion of the grand MARCH PAST
Of British Poets and Men of Letters,
which took place
under the Auspices of the
League of National & Civic Idiocy
on VICTORY DAY,
July 19th, 1919*

OF Shavian prophets, bearded, and the bleat
Of infant Sitwells baying at the moon ;
Of abstruse Eliot, and the effete
Vieux Gosse—Sing Boom ! Sing Boom !

See, here they come ! The martial music swells ;
Northcliffe, beflagged, leads on, with H. G. Wells ;
And prancing solemnly, and prancing slow,
Come Hueffer, Shorter and Sir Sidney Low !
Now, there's a murmuring as of asphodels,
The while each poet mouthes his roundelay—
The bards, the bards ! Be still my heart, 'tis they !

Here's J. C. Squire, and here the laurell'd Shanks ;
There's Ezra's circle of performing Yanks ;
And here that ardent and enduring one
Who, with cool madness, faced th' opposing Hun
Until—flick ! Flick !—they fell down every one.
And here is Lewis, blasting as he goes—
He plays his one-man-band, yet keeps the pose !
Here's Secker with his owl ; the Coterie ;
And gentle John with " gray dog Timothy " :
Here's sly Monro with Chapbook under arm
And fair aspirants round him in a swarm ;
Here is our Centaur, with desponding lyre ;
And here the Wufflet with adoring sire !

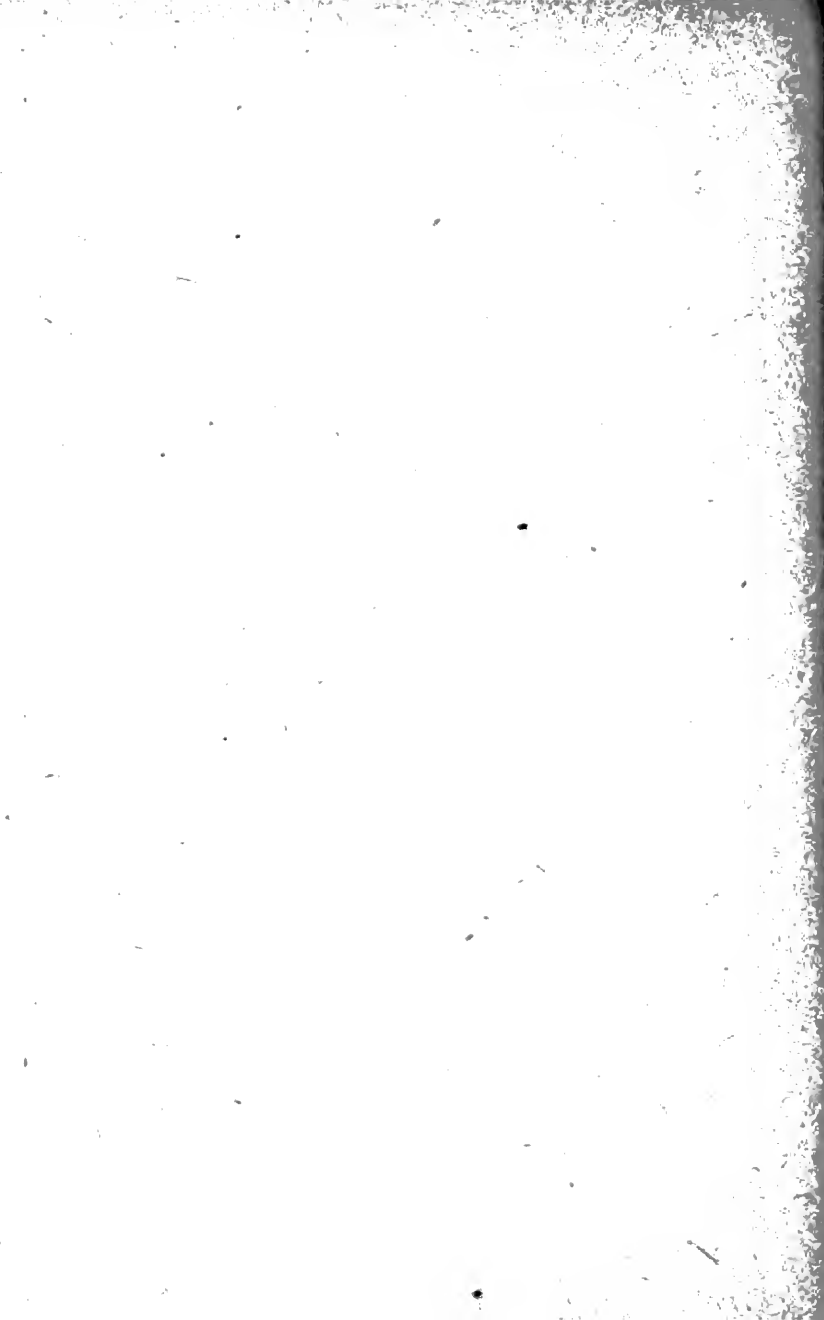
Now come the veterans of Victorian years—
Kipling in khaki, Binyon in tears.
Here Yeats, with eyes distraught, and tangled hair,
Moans the lost vogue of Deirdre, in Mayfair ;
While aged Moore, detached, a little bored,
Tells doubtful tales to Mrs. Humphry Ward.

See, now, Dame Propaganda lifts her gamp
And shelters under it each scribbling scamp.
Hola, Sir Hall ! Hail Beith ! Hail Buchan bland !
See, Dame Corelli takes Hugh Walpole's hand ;
And Dora and Censora hover nigh,
To tempt Sassoon and Read. They cannot buy ;
So Bennett weeps, and Beaver heaves a sigh.

Now comes a rabble foul—avert the eyes—
Of arm-chair " patriots " and Lloyd-Georgian spies.
Hurl them from off Parnassus, with a shout—
Even from the Press Club let them be kicked out !
Chase them from London's pubs, and bid them go
Across the foam, to lunch with Clemenceau !
Chase them with odorous eggs and hunks of cheese !
Be quiet, Muse, I will not sing of these.

Of all the Georgian and Edwardian potes,
Of all the Mile End Yidds in velvet coats,
Of all the sets, the circles and the cliques
Who boost each other's works in their critiques,
Of all on whom E. M. has ever smiled ;
Of all whom Galloway has ever kyled ;
Of " marvellous boys," and of youth's soulful loom—
Sing Boom !
Sing Boom !
Sing Boom !

Part III



Moritura

LEAVE the radiant sun,
Of drowsy rest the giver ;
Leave the song of the birds and leave
The sob of the river.

Break loose from his passionate arms,
And awake from thy dream of bliss :
King Death hath marked thy charms
And fain would kiss.

1902.

The Voices

“ O H, hear them in the Valley—
The wailing voices cry !
They count the yearly tally
Of lost girls that must die.
Cold fingers in the gloaming,
Will grope one night for me ;
I daren't go heather-roaming,
For fear the ghosts will see.

“ And now the rain is falling,
They'll cry the whole long night,
I tremble at their calling—
O take and hold me tight !
Each of those warning spirits
Was once a girl, betrayed ;
O wayward love, be true to me
Who am no more a maid.”

1909.

Cuckfield Park

THE deer stand outlined on a sky
That glows to red and pales to green :
The restless pine-trees shake and sigh,
And troubled spirits move, unseen.

A brooding quiet holds the night.
It is the hour of dreams, of fears,
When day's defiant dying light
Fades, with a sombre hint of tears.

We hardly speak, we hardly dare,
Our steps are noiseless on the grass,
And shadows haunt your eyes and hair.
Does love pass as these moments pass ?

1910.

" Now slants the moonlight . . . "

NOW slants the moonlight through the trees
And bathes the pathway through the wood :
The large leaves wrangle in the breeze
And sigh, as if they understood.

Dear Heart, it is so still and warm,
—A lovelier night there has not been—
But lonely I have left the farm,
And lonely I have crossed the green.

1910.

" Sang a Maid at Peep of Day "

SANG a maid at peep of day
To the blackbird in the yew—
" My true heart has flown away,
Seeking other heart as true."

" Bird, my heart has taken wings,"
Whispered she, with sorrowful eyes.
" In the raging wind it sings,
In the sun it cries, it cries."

1910.

A Home-Coming

" **H**E was a wilful chap," said one
" —The kind that often dies alone."

" He shamed us all," another said :
" 'Tis just as well that he be dead."

" Poor Jack, poor Jack," a third one sighed.
" He swam to Bere against the tide

" And beat John Hawkins, on the green.
It's long since such a lad was seen."

A fourth one laughed : " 'Twould seem the town
" He loved so well has let him down.

" A poor thin corpse 'tis, to be sure,
" That he's brought home to make manure."

They swathed his body, tall and slim,
Then screwed the oak lid down on him.

They put him in his deep-dug hole,
And bawled responses for his soul.

But, ere the gaping earth did close,
One frail hand threw a frail white rose.

The Kiss

COLD it was, Dear, when you kissed me :
Still I hear the steady drips
Of the wet from leaves and branches
As we huddled 'neath the tree :
I can feel your arms about me,
And your lips upon my lips,
And it's you alone I dream of,
—Though you've soon forgotten me.

On the Promenade

(March Winds : Seaford)

“ I NEVER will see you again,
Nor go walking with you, nor be friends ;
You have rumpled my hair in the rain—
This foolishness ends !
You can carry your kisses elsewhere :
I call it low
To paw one about like a bear—
You can go ! ”

“ Oh, you baby, to take it like that—
Why, you'd better sit down in the shelter
And polish your shoes on the mat—
I'm off to the downs, helter-skelter !
For it's Heaven to race in the wind,
With the rain in your eyes, on your cheek,
And perhaps, on the top of the hill, by the cliff, I shall
find
A fairy will speak !

“ Oh, yes, there are fairies up there,
With faces fresh in the dew—
The wild wind kisses their wild long hair,
And they run by the side of you.

“ I'm sorry you're angry, like this,
But I don't think I want to be friends — ”

“ If I gave you your kiss—
Would that make amends ? ”

June

THE clasped hand, the low laugh and the trill of love,
Intimate whisper and long look and sinking head
That sinks but to be captured, while, above,
The stars stand motionless, the tree seems dead.

Cold, in the stillness, looks the thin moon down ;
Far off are murmuring sea and restless town—
As far as life and death and common things—
For two to-night know joy, a joy that sings.

To —

SLEEP sound, Oh my love
—Closed eyes, gentle breath—
While I whisper, so you will not hear,
Things I cannot tell you this side death.

The Case of Pierrot

WHEN I lie down in my bed
Forty devils guard my head,
They don't let me sleep,
They laugh when I weep.
All night long they sneer and sneer :

" Dead heart, cruel heart,
Do you know where she is ?
How she moans ! Don't you hear ?
Under the madman's kiss.

" See, she's fallen on her knees !
—Dead heart, take your ease—
Cries for pity, none to care.
Happy Pair !

" Now the Marquis cracks the whip !
Justine up-to-date.
Cannot give *this* fiend the slip,
For his name is Fate."

Forty devils guard my head
When I lie down in my bed.
All night long they rave and jeer
And I cannot choose but hear.

1920.

Pompes Funèbres

*R*OUND and round in a circle, slowly,
Two by two go the mitred mutes :
Death for the wealthy, death for the lowly,
Death for the pretty girls,
Death for the brutes !

Two black horses with two black tails,
And the long black coach with its four black wheels ;
Black-edged handkerchiefs, black crêpe veils—
But who minds now what the dead dog feels ?

For a corpse is foul as the rose is fair
And the young must love—and the old don't care.
To-night it's the dance, to-morrow the fair.
Bury him quick, with a carriage and pair !

*Round and round in a circle, slowly,
Two by two go the mitred mutes :
Death for the wealthy, death for the lowly,
Death for the pretty girls,
Death for the brutes !*

Ah ! You Moon

AH ! you moon, you fickle one,
Traitor, like the cruel sun !
You've disowned me now I lie
Underneath this alien sky—
Mad, because I cannot die.

Once you liked us, long ago,
When the woods were flower-scented,
When my love, with tender eyes,
Listened to familiar lies
In the forest of St. Cloud.
You were friend to those who woo . . .
Moon you might have warned, prevented
Us from battenning on hope,
Thrown us down an end of rope !
This was coming, and *you knew*,
Could you treat a lover so !

Ah ! you moon, you fickle one,
Traitor, like the cruel sun.

A Little Poem on Sin

CHRIST, since I turned my back upon your altars
Joy has deserted me, the world is dull ;
The cry of passion fades away and falters,
And what may be is no more beautiful.

Hand me the scourge again, forsaken Master,
Open your doors and bid me enter in,
Then shall my pulses throb, my heart beat faster,
And rapture kiss me with the lips of sin.

1920.

Heart and Soul

THE worn heart called the soul that flew,
That soared on high, with fiery wing :
“ Once in a house of flesh, we two
Dwelt silent, sorrowing.

“ I fled you for all false delights, .
Sister, I let you sleep and fade,
While in the breathless summer nights
With deathly joys I played.”

The tired heart wailed and sank and died,
Died terribly, a thousand deaths :
Strange things that passed like wild-birds cried ;
The ghosts drew icy breaths.

“ Too late ! My jewel, Bird of Hope,
You slipt my grasp : now firm and free
You soar to that Olympian slope
Where every soul would be—”

The dead voice failed ; the soul flew by,
Nor turned her course, nor dropped her wing :
A cold wind shivered through the sky :
The pale ghosts heard her sing.

The sister of the weary heart,
The bright-winged bird, the bird of fire,
Flew onwards swiftly, and apart,
Towards the heart's desire.

The Singer's Journey

I

ON the closed door I knocked and knocked again.
It was so cold without : the wind and rain
Buffeted me, and made me sick and sore,
And no birds sang, and night came on, and o'er
The surging wind rose pitiful sad cries
From all the souls cast out of Paradise . . .
On the closed door I knocked and knocked again
Till I grew tired with bitterness and pain.
I made no fine resolve, I shed no tear :
I knew that God was good, that she was dear,
Only I wondered why these things had been,
Why I was glad I loved, that she had seen.
She was too pure to care, perhaps too cold,
So, in the wilderness I should grow old,
With but the memory of her wide grave eyes
To comfort me, shut out from Paradise.
On the closed door I knocked and knocked again,
And suddenly it opened on a chain
And I peered close, and, eager, looked inside—
Then turned me to the world that waited, wide :
'Twas not for pride I suffered, not for sin ;
I was barred out to let a loved one in.

II

And so from Paradise I turned my feet,
And the earth claimed me, and I ran to meet
The salutation of the wind and rain,
That swept across a desolate, sad plain.
Then called the mountains and the grassy hills,
Broad seas and rivers, and small tinkling rills :
And there were forests wonderful and dark,
And when the shrill wind ceased, sweet sang the lark,
And I forgot lost love, in pleasant places,
For I found other heavens, and sweeter faces

Smiled from the lake, or laughed behind the reeds ;
—But in the night the heart that's stricken bleeds.
Then once at dawn-time, by a quiet pool,
A goat-legged fellow cried : " Come hither, fool,
And learn the tune that makes the world roll round :
Life, lust and laughter mingle in the sound :
'Twas made with longing and with tears and fire,
But laughter conquered it, and mocked desire."
And then he took his pipe, this goat-legged man,
And all the winds cried : " Hark, the song of Pan :
Pan who is god of flocks and herds, who dwells
Deep in the woods a-weaving curious spells
And tunes that sob for joy, that thrill and weep—
That charm to laughter and that soothe to sleep."

III

And by and by Pan made a flute for me,
And when I took the flute I seemed to see
Visions of bodied-thoughts, gay-clothed or dark,
And each thought made a sound : and some the lark
Took for his song—the gayest did he take—
But I for mine took sombre ones, to make
A mournful wail for my lost love, but while
I sang I did forget my grief and smile.
And then the sweetness of the tunes I made
Thrilled me, and sorrow vanished and I played
Enraptured, with the sounds that charmed me best ;
And I made songs for pleasure, while the West
Crimsoned behind the dark, enchanted woods.
Still by the silent pool, in varying moods,
All night beneath the stars I laughed and sang,
And through the shadows joyful echoes rang,
And presently dryads slipt from tree to tree ;
Nymphs from the field and stream crept close to me
And stealthy satyrs ; and web-footed men
Climbed from the lake ; and from a fairy glen

Came trooping little people with bright eyes,
Who listened while I made them melodies.
Then slender women, with white limbs and hair
Dusky as night, sought out my reedy lair
To hear my singing, and the loveliest one
Lay in my arms until the night was done.

1909.

Part IV

Brighton Beach

(Whit-Monday, 1909)

CHOCOLATES and brandy balls and butterscotch,
"Tit-Bits," "The Mother's Friend" and "Woman's
Life,"

Sixpenny photographs, a silver watch,
A "little wonder" of a pocket-knife—
All these for sale: the sunshine, given free,
Beats down upon the beach and on the sea
Where ma and brats—fat legs and little feet—
Paddle and laugh and redden in the heat.
All through the happy day they call and shout,
Shriek with delight and giggle and "hooray";
And two alone look gloomy and put out,
Causing a lady to her pal to say:
"'Oo's that young man wot give 'is girl a shove?"
"O them poor sulky devils, they're in love!"

Beaugency-sur-Loire

A STRONG stroke, and the boat leaps, and the heart
grows merry !
But I think of a little farm slid by, and a dark girl at the
ferry.
The sun dies, and a bird cries, and a bright star's gleaming :
And I afloat, and all alone, with the long night for dream-
ing. . . .

A strong stroke, and the boat leaps, and the stream swirls
under ;
And here am I by the still white town, in a sad, hush'd
wonder.
Lovers sigh and the leaves sigh—and bright eyes peeping :
A boy laughs and a girl laughs . . . and ah ! who's weeping ?
1912.

In Picardy

WAVES lap the beach, pines stretch to meet the sea—
A pale light on the horizon lingers and shines
That might shine round the Graal ; and we
Stand very silent, underneath the pines.

Oh, swift expresses for the spirit's flight !
Sometimes the moon is like a maid I know,
Looking roguishly back and flying onward—so
I follow, flashing after. Blessed night !

1912.

Calle Memo O Loredan

WE were staying (that night) in a very old palace—
Very dark, very large, and sheer to the water below.
The rooms were silent and strange, and you were frightened :
‘The silver lamp gave a feeble, flickering glow.

And the bed had a high dark tester and carved black posts.
And behind our heads was a glimmer of old brocade.
Do you remember ? you thought the shadows were full of
ghosts,
And the sound of the lapping water made you afraid.

Ah, and your face shone pale, in the gleam of that quivering
flame !
And your bosom was rich with the round pearls row on
row ;
And you looked proud and jewelled, and passionate without
shame—
Like some Princess who stooped to her lover, a long
while ago.

1912.

Barcelona

A SQUALID station, tramcars, dusty palms
In a great square ; and then the surging streets
That cut the town in two, where its heart beats.
Crowds jostle to and fro, brats cadge for alms,
Sell lottery tickets, hand their sister's card
(With her address, nude photograph and hours) ;
Men offer little birds, old women flow'rs ;
Red-coated guards loaf by ; a half-blind bard
Drones out stale tunes ; and amorous ladies stare
(Clad in rich clothes, with very bad black eyes)
At men with Brownings bulging at their thighs
Who'll fight for a Republic—when they dare.

1914.

Juillac-le-Coq

(Charente)

IT'S to Juillac-le-coq, where the vines stretch o'er the plain,
And the little streams are running eau-de-vie and the sweet champagne,
That I'd take my pipe and smoke it, sitting on some garden wall,
And kick my heels and dream my dreams, and never work at all.
*For the sun's bright, and the moon's bright, and all the women's eyes
Are bright there ; and joy's there, and love that fools despise.*

It's a little dusty village, full of laughing men and girls ;
At the thought of it my breath comes short, my tired brain spins and whirls.
I must tramp along and find it, choose my sunny white-washed wall,
And sing my songs, and dream my dreams, and never work at all.
*There are vines there, and wines there, and straight, long dazzling ways
That shine white, on a fine night, when high the full moon sways.*

1910.

Roads

LONG roads that stretch out hard and white,
Long roads that climb into the sky,
They haunt me in this London night :
I knew them well in days gone by—

Knew them and loved them ! Bright they shone—
They led to that enchanting land,
Where all the throneless gods live on
And where men go, who understand ;

Where hills too lovely to be true
Rise dazzling, in diviner air,
And under heavens for ever blue
Love grows to friendship fine and rare.

Far from a bitter world of toil
They led, those roads of long ago :
They climbed the skies to fairy soil,
They glittered like a line of snow.

1910.

Envoi

Ars Longa

THEY hanged the poet up next day.
It was a rare and curious treat ;
They never had seen so much meat
Suspended, juicily, in May.

They sat them down and made a feast,
And, carving him, they sang his songs
Of lovely girls, and shameful wrongs,
And amorous customs in the East.

But Gubbins, nosey man for pelf,
Denounced their joyous foozaloo
And piously dispersed the crew—
Then ate the poet's soul himself. . . .

Some Press Opinions of Mr. Goldring's Verses.

James Elroy Flecker (in *The Cambridge Review*): "Mr. Goldring is a young poet; his technique in these days, when so high a standard is set, is careless . . . yet one feels that a book like his 'Country Boy' ought to sell thousands, not mere hundreds, so full it is of the joy of life, of modern love and sorrow. It is a book about the people, for the people. It is full of the magic of proper names:

'And ere he went to London
Our maidens pleased him well,
As little Rose from Yeovil
And dozens more can tell.'

Is there not all the honey and sweetness and summer of the West Country in the sound of her—'little Rose from Yeovil.' Could anything give the weariness of suburban pavements, yet make them sublime, better than this:

'On through the dripping moonless night
Up West End Lane and Frogmal Rise,
They trace their footsteps, by the light
Of love that fills their weary eyes.'

For he knows, as all true modern poets know, that the world has become a fairy world again, and that the name of Camden Town can haunt us as much as Xanadu, nay more. We cannot place him with Mr. Yeats, Mr. Housman or Mr. Masfield: but he should be loved by thousands, and the student of the future will treasure his work as a document of fine English sentiment and feeling long after our Francis Thompson, our Watson and our Trench are forgotten."

Birmingham Daily Post: "If Mr. Douglas Goldring does not belie the promise of his first book, a good deal will be heard of him, and the attractively produced little volume before us will become precious to the collector. What matters above all else in a young poet is personality—individuality of feeling and outlook. Possessing this, his style may safely be left to develop itself; and this quality is unmistakably present on every page of 'A Country Boy, and Other Poems.' . . . Already his individuality of vision is beginning to make its own music."

Edward Thomas: (In the *London Bookman*): "His book 'Streets' consists of experiments in capturing the soul, or one of the souls, of twenty or thirty London streets. In some he speaks of his own feeling towards them; in others he speaks for them as if he were an inhabitant. His methods vary almost as much as his streets, from the downright to the romantic, but he is invariably interesting, often brilliant."

Sunday Times: "Mr. Douglas Goldring has caught the glamour of London's highways and by-ways . . . there is real poetry in this slender volume, and Mr. Goldring has the art of suffusing with ecstasy apparently commonplace things. . . ."

Evening Standard: "Poems of London streets remarkable for their

freshness. They are short and impressionistic, at times suggesting comparison with the work of Mr. Davies and Mr. James Stephens. . . But the poet has his own thoughts, and his own methods of expression admirably suited to them. This little volume deserves recognition.'

Morning Post : " Mr. Goldring's book has been a great comfort to us. All lovers of London will love it."

Rebecca West (Star) : " I insist on saying that his volume ' Streets ' contains some of the loveliest verse that has ever been written about London."

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